



# “FROM THE GM’S DESK”

## 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2019



The level in weir pool continues to rise as a result of inflows from the Culgoa River. It is still unclear as to how much water that will be received into the Bourke weir pool but it is anticipated that it will continue to slowly rise over the next couple of weeks.

Level three (3) water restrictions are still in place.

The use of fixed sprinklers continues to be prohibited.

Hand held hoses can, however, now be used for two (2) hours per day only at each property.

These restrictions apply to both filtered and raw water supplies.

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As of Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2019, the Darling River will have stopped flowing over the weir at Bourke for 292 days, far exceeding the previous record created in 2006 of 200 days.

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The lack of water in the river has meant that the PV Jandra has been able to cruise and in fact spent some time basically sitting on a sea of mud. The slightly increased water levels have seen it being re-floated and once the level in the river reaches three (3) metres should be able to again be utilised for charters.

The PV Jandra is one of our major tourist attractions and we have numerous enquiries regarding its operation, and no doubt its inability to be utilised has impacted on the length of stay by some visitors.

The tourist season although slow to start seems to have gained a bit of momentum over the past couple of weeks. This is welcome news for those persons in the tourism industry, either directly or indirectly.

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Work on Stage 3 of the reconstruction and sealing of the Wanaaring Road is well advanced. Stage three (3) involves the area around Wongareena Plains. In addition to the funding being made available from the Fixing Country Roads Program, further funding has been provided under the Regional Road Repair program and this will result in another six (6) kilometres being sealed.

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To assist in the provision of the water required to undertake the work, a new bore has been drilled and equipped and this will also allow water to also be available for future projects within the area.

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The Wanaaring Airstrip has been subject to a reseal with the funding being provided by a combination a grant from the Commonwealth Government under the Remote Airstrips Program coupled with funding from Bourke Shire Council.

The provision of an all-weather airstrip at Wanaaring is extremely important in cases of medical emergencies and it is good to see these works undertaken. Like Louth the Wanaaring Airstrip is not only sealed but also equipped with lighting to enable access twenty fours (24) per day.

Members of the public who are planning to travel to Hungerford next week for the Bi- Annual Hungerford Field day will have the opportunity to inspect recently sealed sections at Youngerina and Naree.

Funding for the two (2) new sections was provided by a Drought Initiative of the New South Wales Government.

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Council grading contractors are currently working around the Louth area completing necessary maintenance works and residents should see improved road surfaces in the area.

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Stage one (1) of the construction of the levee shared path from the Wal Mitchell Wharf Precinct to Rotary Park is under way and being completed by local contractors. This is the first stage of the project that will eventually see the walk way link Bourke to North Bourke.

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There were a lot of people in town last week for the Education Summit conducted by Maranguka in association with both Department of Education and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

All reports in relation to the summit were extremely positive and it encouraging to see the support provided by so many agencies to enhance the education and training opportunities in Bourke.

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The opportunity was taken following the summit to hold a meeting of the Governance Group of the Bourke Aboriginal Employment Prosperity Strategy (BAEPS), which I Co-Chair with Mick Williams representing Maranguka. Representatives of a number of other agencies who sit on the Governance Group including the Department of Industry, Department of Education and the New South Ombudsman's Office were involved in the Summit and it made sense to meet whilst they were in town.

There were a number of matters discussed and observations made and it was recognised that sometimes as a community we don't recognised and celebrate our successes.

In looking at the evaluation measures for BAEPS one of the measures considered was the number of students who have completed Year 12 at Bourke and had either secured employment or had decided to undertaken further education.

Principal of Bourke High School, Andrew Ryder noted that of the nineteen (19) students who completed Year 12 at Bourke in 2018; all had been successful in gaining employment or were continuing further study.

This is a great result and congratulations to all concerned and if this can be replicated in future years it will be tremendous.

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The Environmental Flow from both Copeton and Glenlyon Dams is gradually making its way down stream. The water passed Collarenebri and is making its way towards Walgett.

The low river levels and dry river beds have combined to make it difficult to predict how far the water will get but there is a strong degree of optimism that it will get to at least Brewarrina, and hopefully beyond.

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If you are having difficulties in meeting your obligations in relation to the payment of rates and charges please contact Council's Revenue Officer who may be able to discuss the implementation of a payment plan.

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The Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils will hold an Extraordinary Meeting on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019 in Dubbo to further progress the procurement process regarding the establishment of an air service for the towns of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett/ Lightning Ridge.

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The news of a potential air service for Bourke and the other towns was welcomed by a number of delegates to the Educational Summit held last week with delegates indicating that the air service would both substantially reduce travel times and make access to each of the towns much easier.

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To protect Greater Sydney's Water Supply, the NSW Government has announced Level 1 Water Restrictions which came into effect across Greater Sydney (Sydney, Blue Mountains and the Illawarra) from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019.

With the ongoing drought, there's more pressure on Greater Sydney's Water Resources. The NSW Government has introduced early restrictions on outdoor water use to conserve water for the future.

The fact that Australia's largest city is on water restrictions serves to demonstrate just how dire the situation is across the state.

Bourke has been fortunately able to revert to Level 3 restrictions and the chances on inflows into the weir pool may see this further eased. However, the forecast for the winter apparently points to a drier period and if rainfall is not received into the various catchments we could quite easily see the stronger restrictions once again imposed.

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The Hungerford Field days are on this weekend and I know the locals of Hungerford and District put in a lot of work to make the day a success and it would be good to see ~~good~~ a big crowd in attendance.

Functions such as these are important to build the community resilience and spirit and build up the social fabric of these isolated communities and should be supported.

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The Mayor Councillor Barry Hollman attended his first meeting of the New South Wales Country Mayors Association held at Parliament House last Friday.

The New Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shelley Hancock, MP was in attendance as was the Minister for Health in NSW, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, MP.

Both Ministers gave feely of their time to answer questions.

In all 86 delegates from across New South Wales attended the meeting.

One of the issues raised at the meeting was the substantial increase in the Emergency Service Levy and the lack of consultation with Councils regarding the increase and the fact that the increase was announced after most Councils had prepared their 2019/2020 Operational Plans (Budget).

There was strong support for the action undertaken by Local Government New South Wales in opposing the increase and looking to defer its introduction.

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As a member of the Board Regional Development Australia- Orana (RDA-Orana) I attended a Planning and Budget meeting of the Board on Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019. There were presentations on the day from Jillian Kilby, Roger Fletcher and Phil Johnston from Narromine. Destination Country & Outback were unable to attend but provided a presentation for the day.

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I stayed in Dubbo on Monday night to attend a meeting on Tuesday of the Regional Cross Sector Leadership Executive Group which brings together the heads of the various agencies and Not for Profit and Philanthropic Organisations across the region. This meeting is to assist in ensuring the group is effective in providing whole of government alignment, a solution focussed approach and the ability to monitor outcomes in the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project in Bourke.

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Annette and I joined with a number of other locals in attending a dinner at the Bridge Inn organised as part of an initiative of the Rural doctors Network called "go rural"

The "Go Rural" initiative saw 20 students from various universities across NSW and Tasmania who are studying in various medical related professions, travel across the state last week on a road trip designed to encourage future health professionals to consider the benefits and rewards of a rural health career.

The four (4) day 'Go Rural' road trip, incorporated practice visits, clinical activities, community events, themed dinners, cultural events and historical exhibitions in towns including Tamworth, Narrabri, Walgett, Bourke, Brewarrina and Dubbo.

Research published in the Medical Journal of Australia shows rural exposure during medical training has been associated with an increased likelihood of medical students entering rural practice after graduation.

Go Rural provided students with a taste of how rewarding careers in rural health can be and the road trip was organised to give medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health students the opportunity to see for themselves, the amazing opportunities that working rurally offers, both professionally and socially.

With the difficulty being experienced in attracting and retaining Allied Health Professionals to Western New South Wales the initiative is an excellent concept.

The dinner featured guest speakers Dr Robert Reed and Daniel Kelly an Aboriginal Health practitioner both from Brewarrina speaking about their experience in Rural Health.

Bourke Shire has been a long term supporter of such initiatives.

Bourke is also fortunate to host a training and placement facility of the University of Sydney which coordinates training and placement of students across a wide section of North West New South Wales.

That facility is located with the grounds of the Bourke Hospital.

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The Chairs and Executive Officers of all the Joint Organisations of Councils (JOs) across the State met in Sydney last week to discuss the issues impacting on the formation and operation of the JO network.

Bourke Shire Council is a member of the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils (FNWJOC) along with Walgett and Cobar Councils.

The FNWJOC has recently advertised for a part-time Chief Executive Officer who will take over from Peter Vlatko who has been acting in that roll and has been assisted by Mark Riley who has been acting in a Project Officer capacity.

The FNWJOC have been fortunate to secure funding for the initial operation and this has provided for a good financial platform.

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A reminder, that Bourke Public Library has a good range of material for all ages and interests and also carries a range of DVDs which can be borrowed.

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Representatives of Bourke Shire Council will meet with the Local Land Services late next week to develop some plans regarding the implementations of strategies to ensure the funding recently received for the control of wild dogs is able to obtain the maximum benefit.

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Quote of the week!

"The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one."  
Elbert Hubbard

Ross Earl  
General Manager